



History of Human Rights

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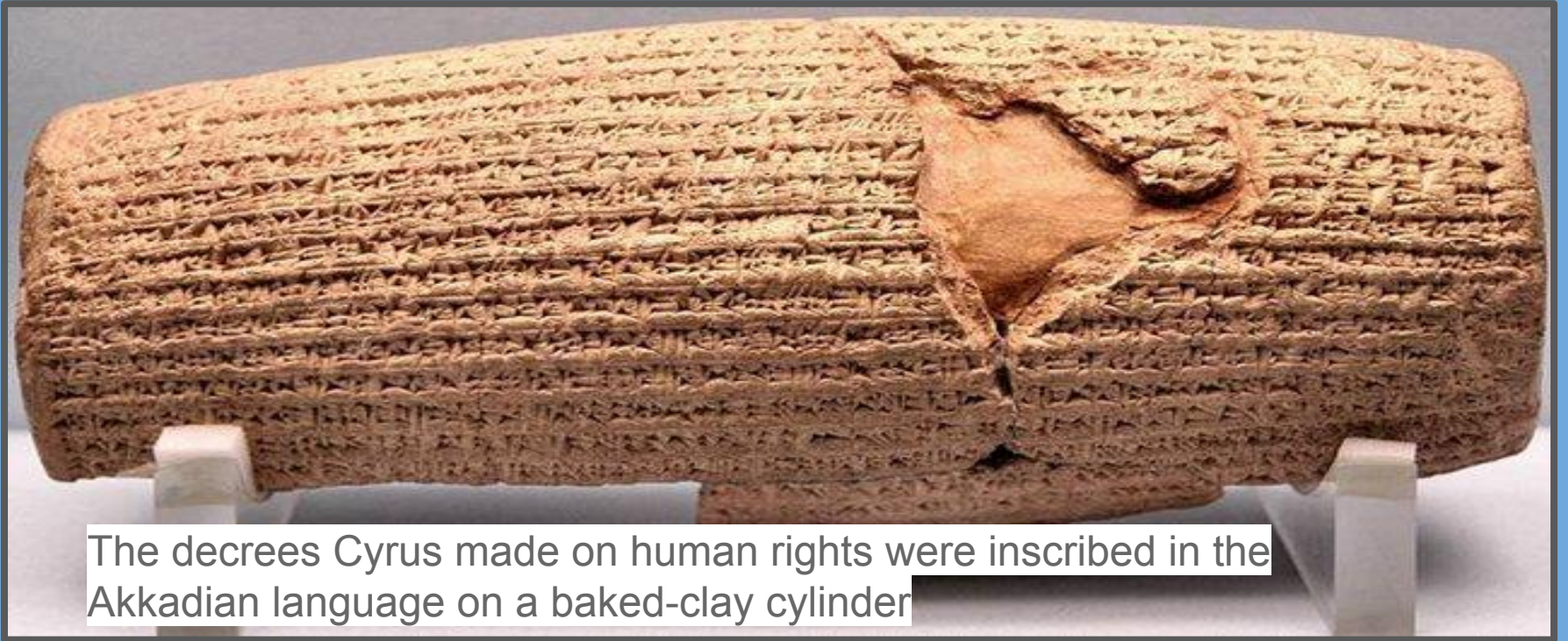
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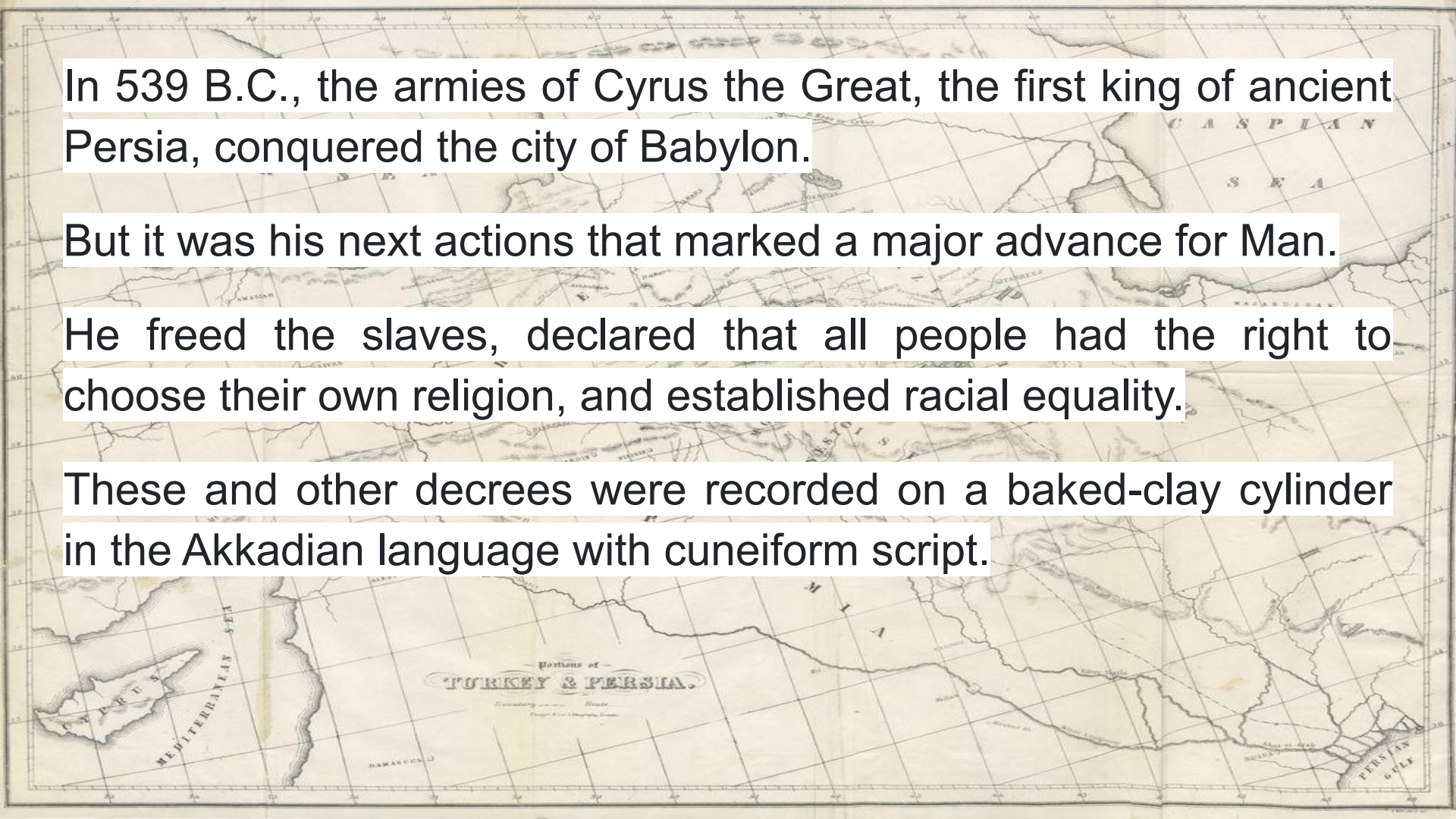
Semester : IV

HUMAN RIGHTS

The Cyrus Cylinder (539 B.C.)



The decrees Cyrus made on human rights were inscribed in the Akkadian language on a baked-clay cylinder



In 539 B.C., the armies of Cyrus the Great, the first king of ancient Persia, conquered the city of Babylon.

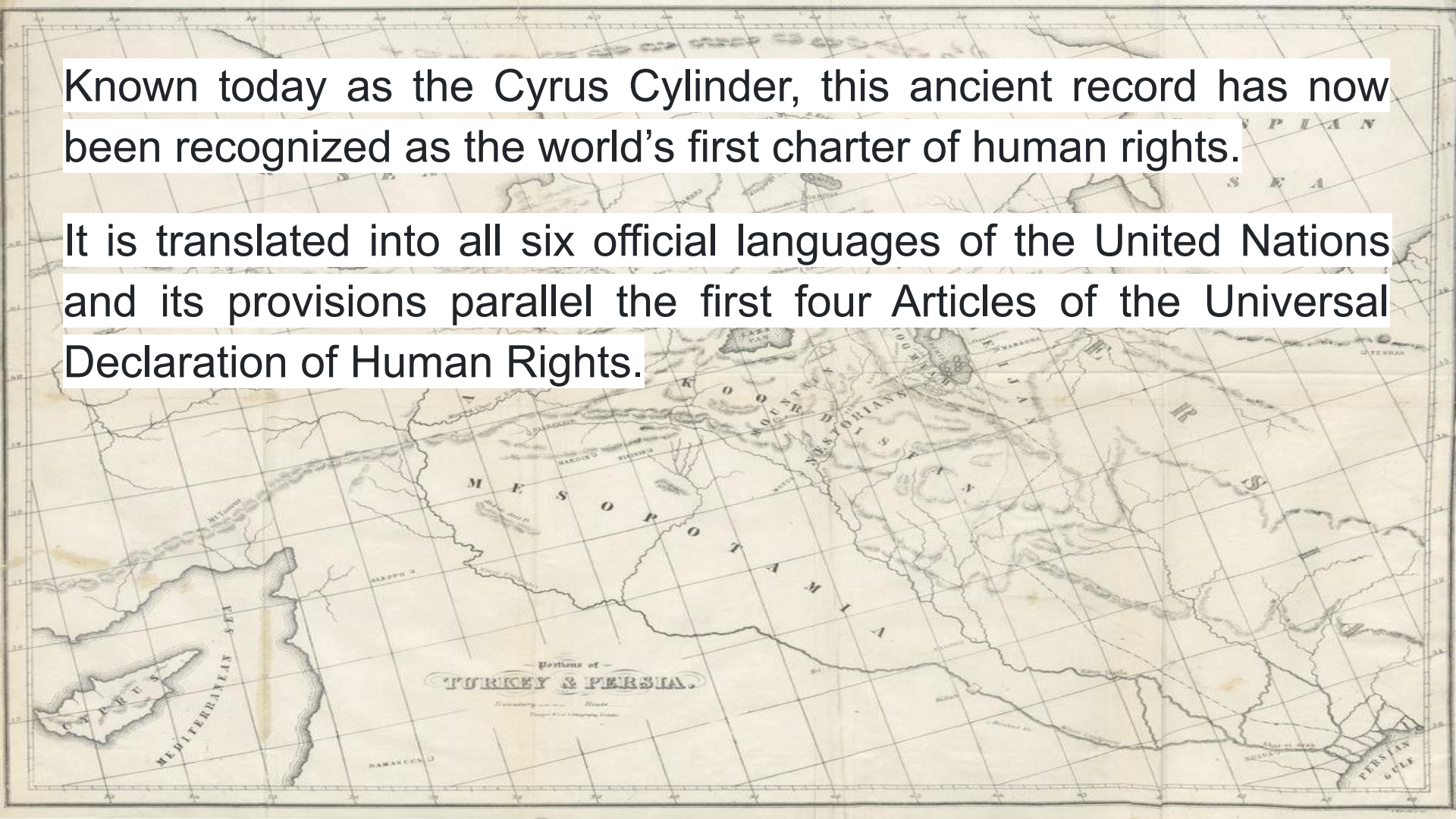
But it was his next actions that marked a major advance for Man.

He freed the slaves, declared that all people had the right to choose their own religion, and established racial equality.

These and other decrees were recorded on a baked-clay cylinder in the Akkadian language with cuneiform script.

Known today as the Cyrus Cylinder, this ancient record has now been recognized as the world's first charter of human rights.

It is translated into all six official languages of the United Nations and its provisions parallel the first four Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



The Spread of Human Rights

From Babylon, the idea of human rights spread quickly to India, Greece and eventually Rome.

There the concept of “natural law” arose, in observation of the fact that people tended to follow certain unwritten laws in the course of life, and Roman law was based on rational ideas derived from the nature of things.



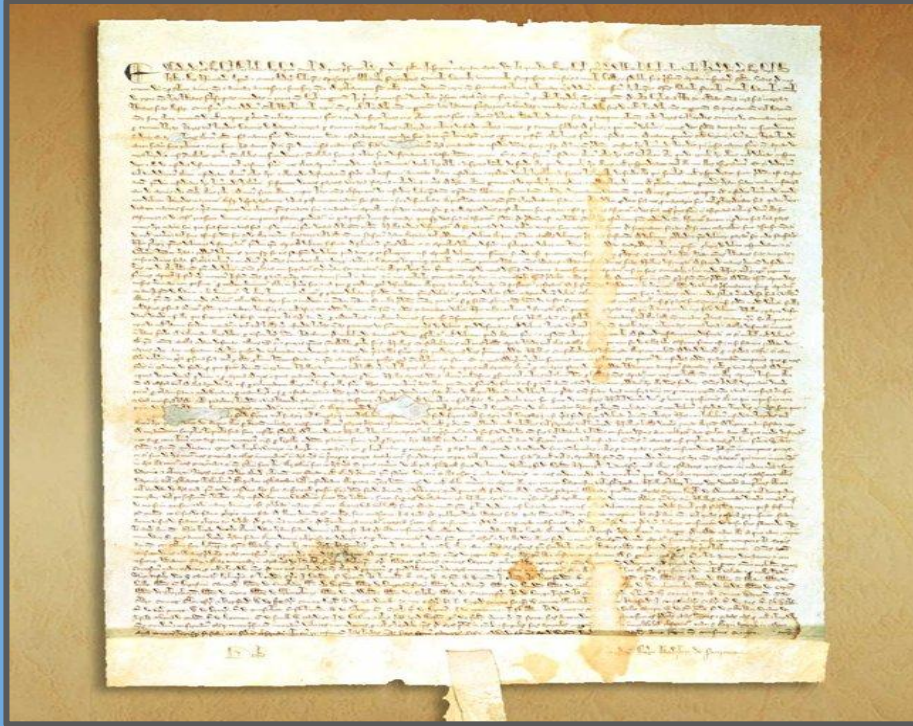
Cyrus the Great, the first king of Persia, freed the slaves of Babylon, 539 B.C.

Documents asserting individual rights

- ❑ *Magna Carta (1215)*
- ❑ *The Petition of Right (1628)*
- ❑ *The US Constitution (1787)*
- ❑ *The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789)*
- ❑ *The US Bill of Rights (1791)*

are the written precursors to many of today's human rights documents.

The Magna Carta (1215)



Magna Carta, or “Great Charter,” signed by the King of England in 1215, was a turning point in human rights.

The Magna Carta, or “Great Charter,” was arguably the most significant early influence on the extensive historical process that led to the rule of constitutional law today in the English-speaking world.

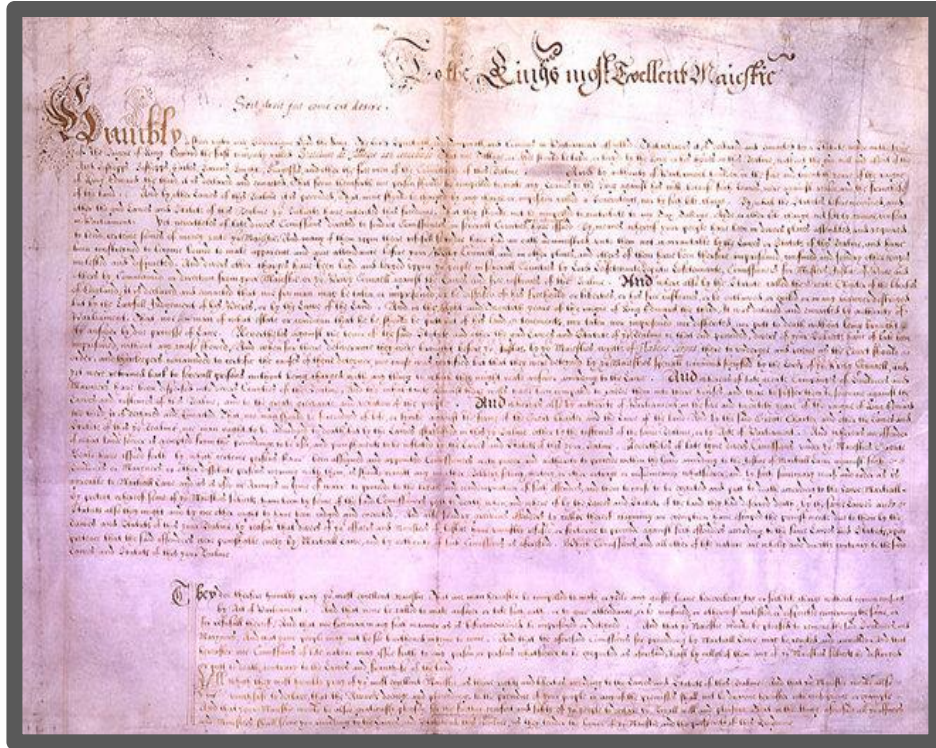
In 1215, after King John of England violated a number of ancient laws and customs by which England had been governed, his subjects forced him to sign the Magna Carta, which enumerates what later came to be thought of as human rights.

Among them was the right of the church to be free from governmental interference, the rights of all free citizens to own and inherit property and to be protected from excessive taxes.

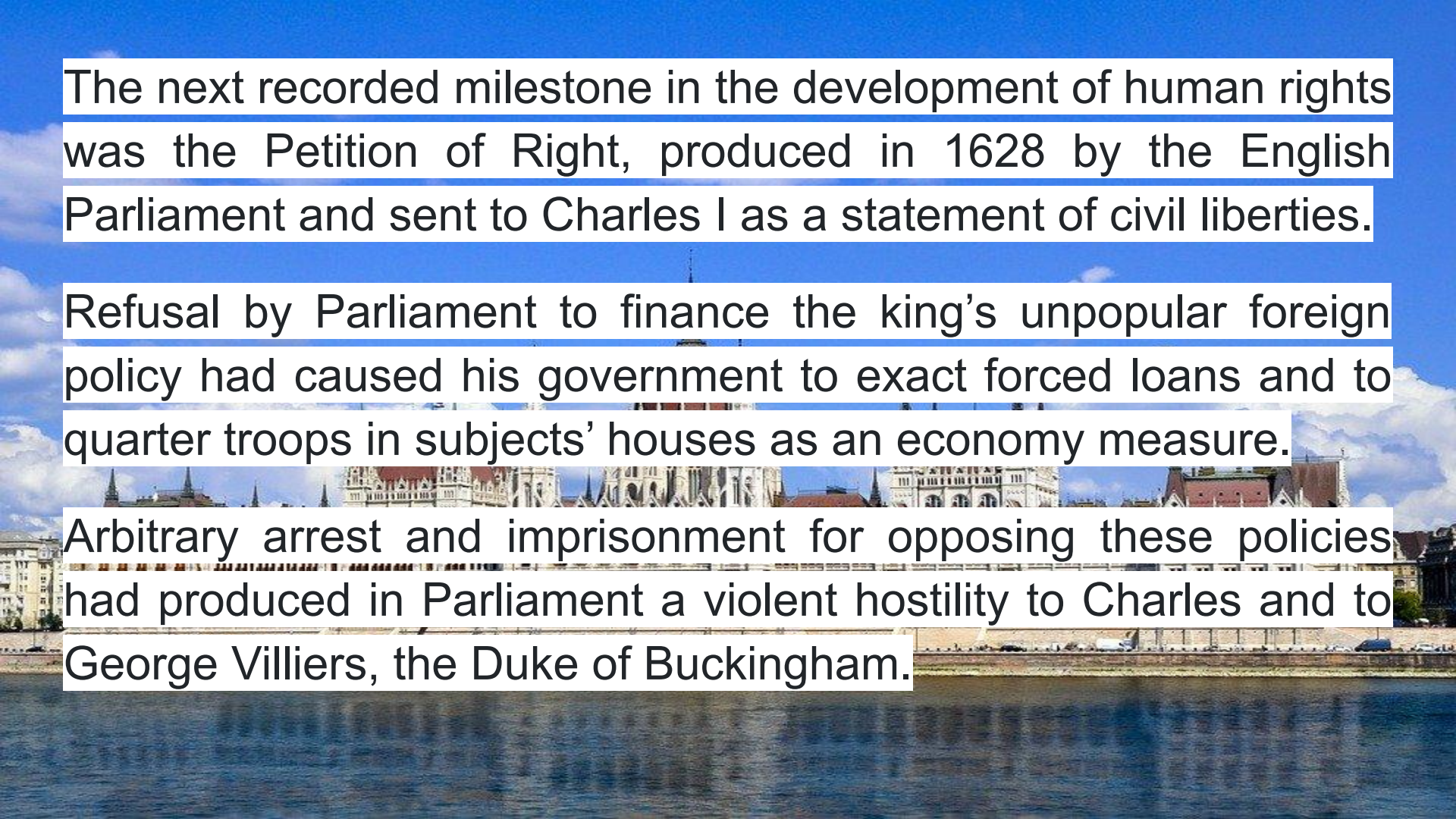
It established the right of widows who owned property to choose not to remarry, and established principles of due process and equality before the law. It also contained provisions forbidding bribery and official misconduct.

Widely viewed as one of the most important legal documents in the development of modern democracy, the Magna Carta was a crucial turning point in the struggle to establish freedom.

Petition of Right (1628)



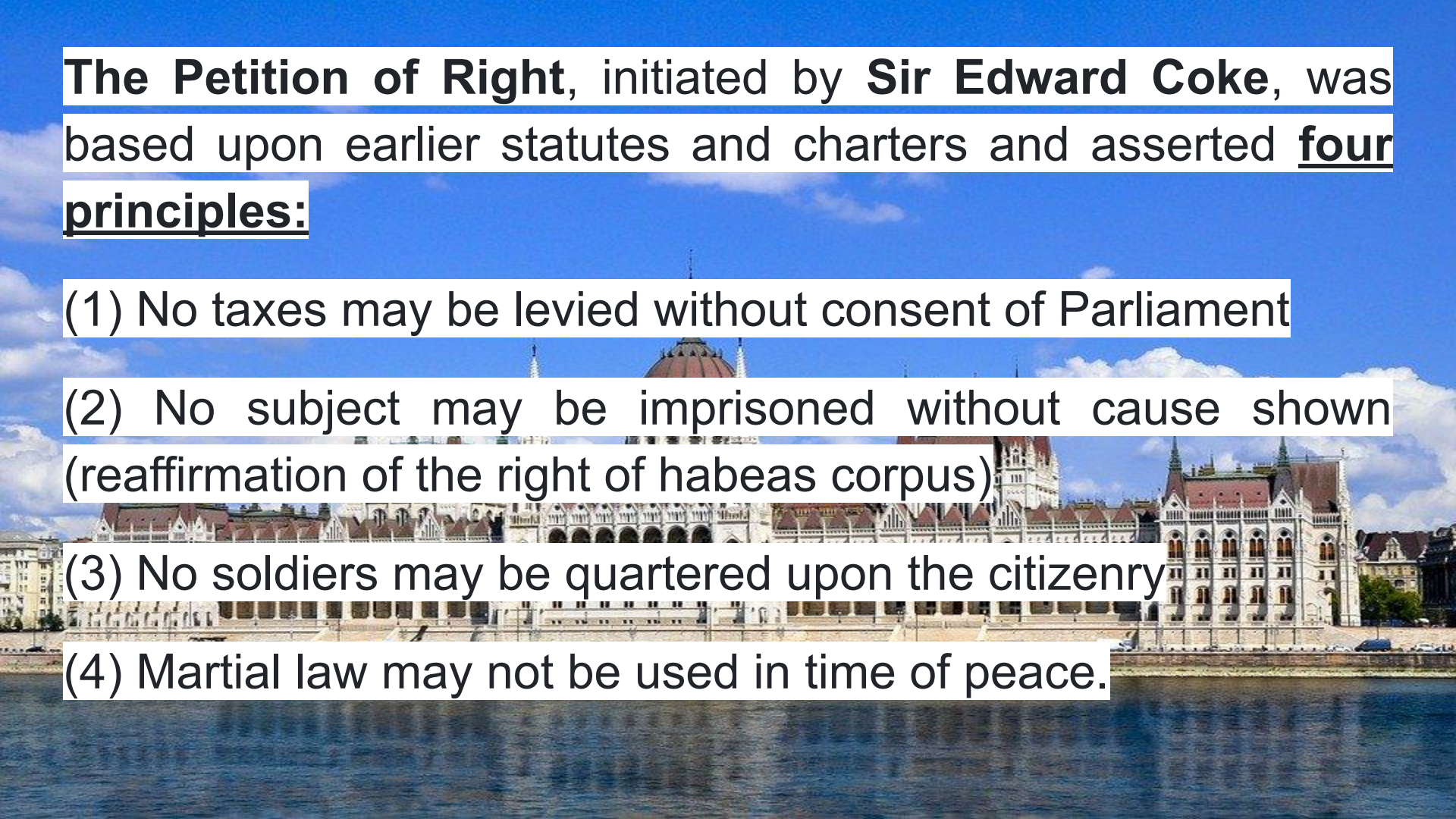
In 1628 the English Parliament sent this statement of civil liberties to King Charles I.

The background of the image shows a panoramic view of a city skyline, likely London, seen from across a body of water. The skyline includes several prominent buildings with Gothic-style architecture, such as spires and large windows. The sky is a clear, vibrant blue with a few wispy white clouds. The water in the foreground is dark blue and reflects the sky and buildings.

The next recorded milestone in the development of human rights was the Petition of Right, produced in 1628 by the English Parliament and sent to Charles I as a statement of civil liberties.

Refusal by Parliament to finance the king's unpopular foreign policy had caused his government to exact forced loans and to quarter troops in subjects' houses as an economy measure.

Arbitrary arrest and imprisonment for opposing these policies had produced in Parliament a violent hostility to Charles and to George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham.

The background of the image is a photograph of the Hungarian Parliament Building, a large Gothic Revival structure with a prominent dome, situated along the Danube River in Budapest. The sky is blue with some clouds.

The Petition of Right, initiated by **Sir Edward Coke**, was based upon earlier statutes and charters and asserted **four principles**:

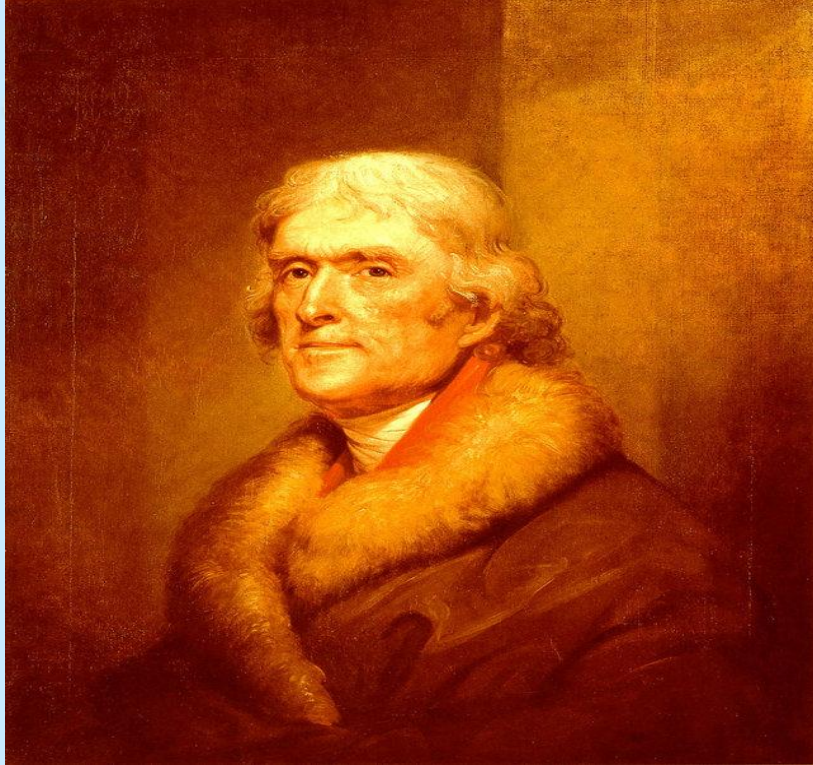
(1) No taxes may be levied without consent of Parliament

(2) No subject may be imprisoned without cause shown (reaffirmation of the right of habeas corpus)

(3) No soldiers may be quartered upon the citizenry

(4) Martial law may not be used in time of peace.

United States Declaration of Independence (1776)

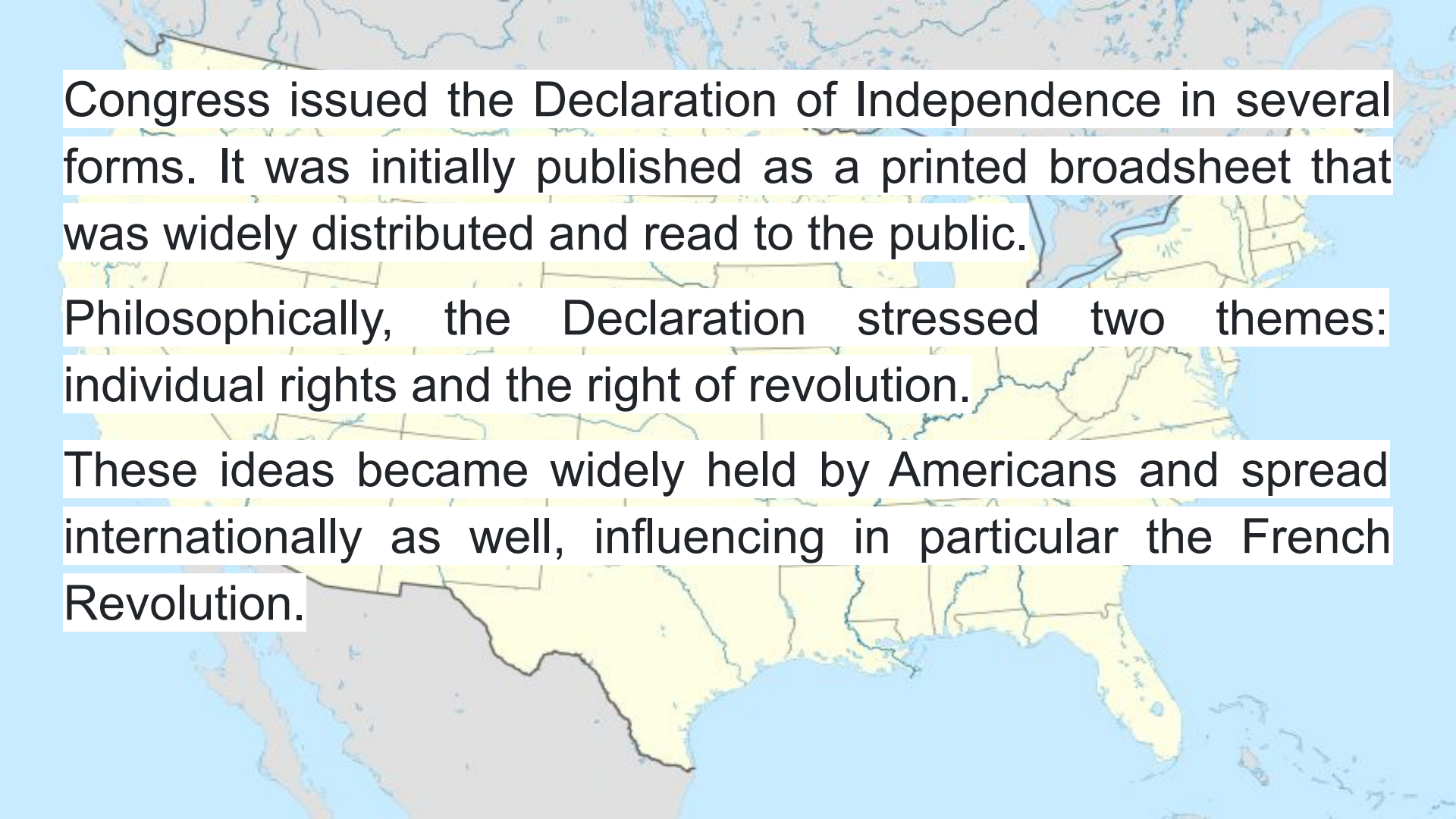


In 1776, Thomas Jefferson penned the American Declaration of Independence.

A light blue map of the United States serves as the background for the text. The map shows the outlines of the states and major water bodies. The text is overlaid on the map in a white, sans-serif font.

On July 4, 1776, the United States Congress approved the Declaration of Independence.

Its primary author, **Thomas Jefferson**, wrote the Declaration as a formal explanation of why Congress had voted on July 2 to declare independence from Great Britain, more than a year after the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War, and as a statement announcing that the **thirteen American Colonies were no longer a part of the British Empire.**

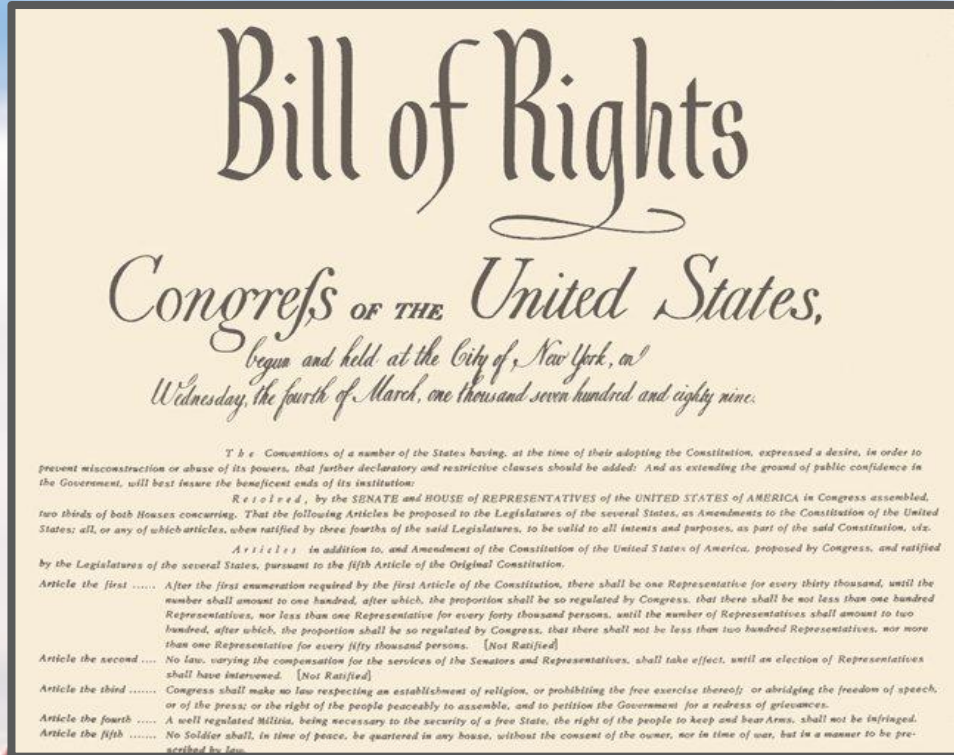
A light blue background map of the United States, showing state boundaries and major water bodies. The map is partially obscured by three white text boxes.

Congress issued the Declaration of Independence in several forms. It was initially published as a printed broadsheet that was widely distributed and read to the public.

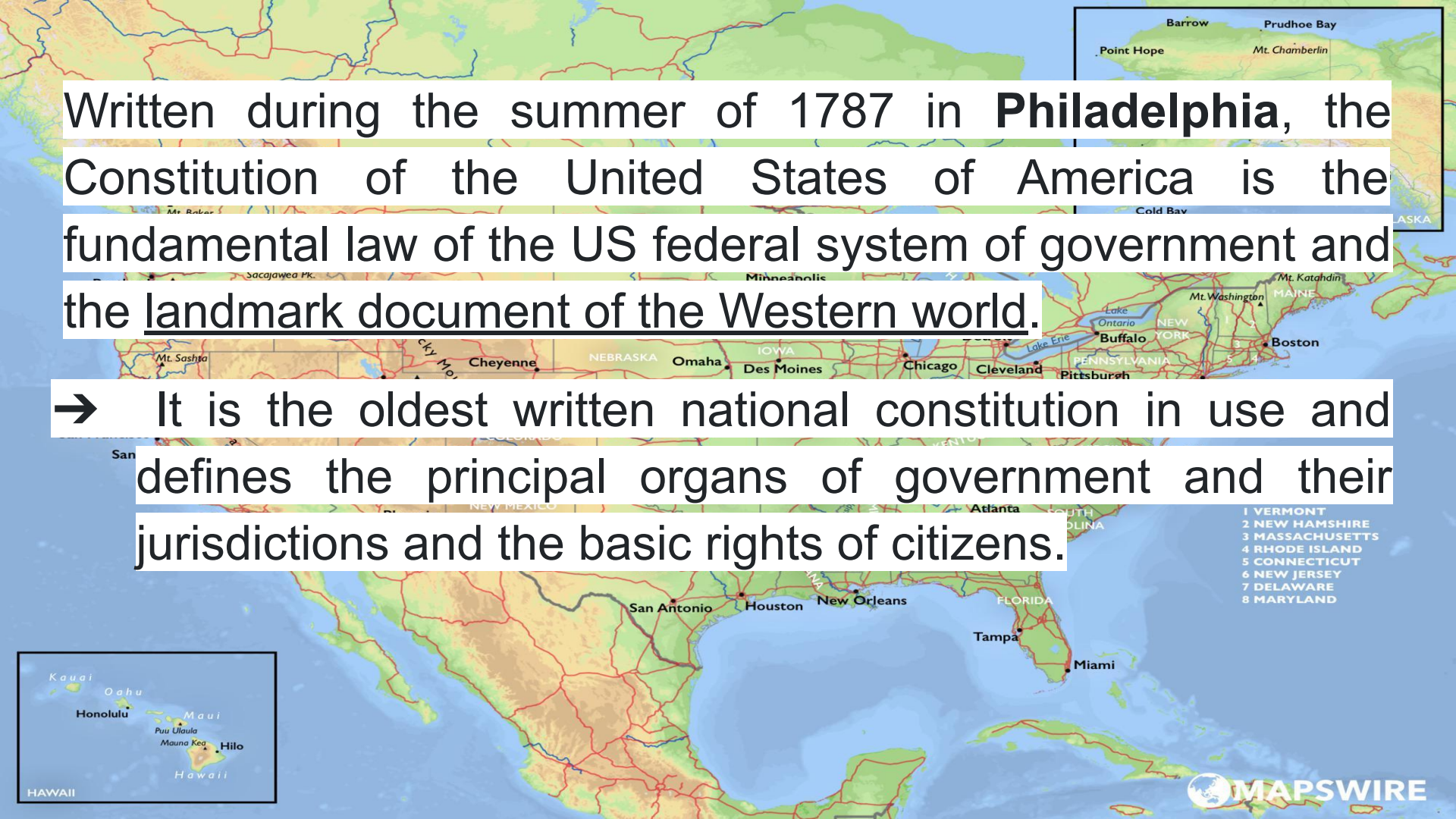
Philosophically, the Declaration stressed two themes: individual rights and the right of revolution.

These ideas became widely held by Americans and spread internationally as well, influencing in particular the French Revolution.

The Constitution of the United States of America (1787) and Bill of Rights (1791)



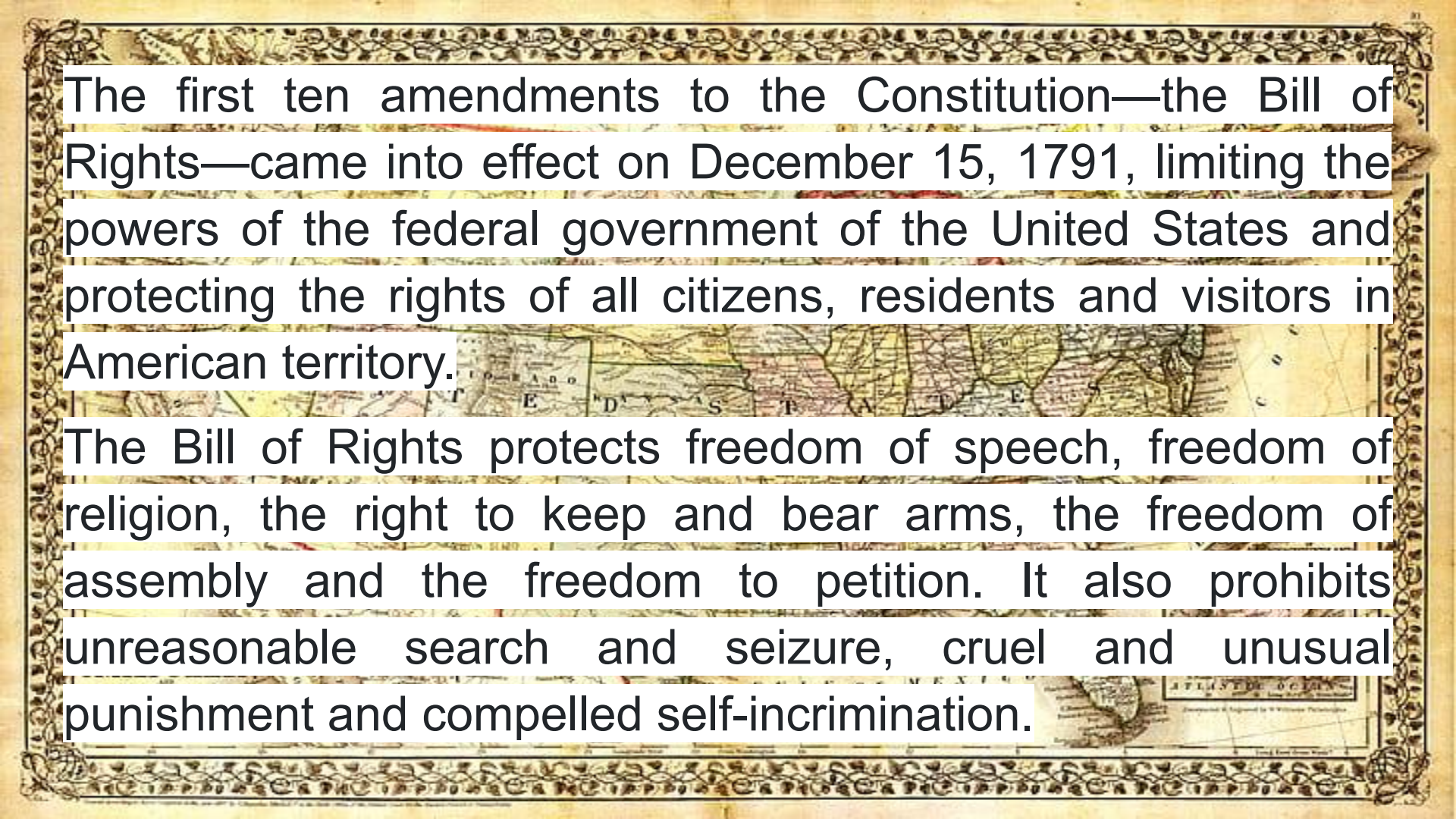
**The Bill of
Rights of the US
Constitution
protects basic
freedoms of
United States
citizens.**

A topographic map of the United States with several text overlays. The text is presented in white boxes with black outlines. The background map shows state boundaries, major cities, and geographical features like mountains and lakes. An inset map of Alaska is in the top right, and an inset map of the Hawaiian Islands is in the bottom left.

Written during the summer of 1787 in **Philadelphia**, the Constitution of the United States of America is the fundamental law of the US federal system of government and the landmark document of the Western world.

→ It is the oldest written national constitution in use and defines the principal organs of government and their jurisdictions and the basic rights of citizens.

- 1 VERMONT
- 2 NEW HAMPSHIRE
- 3 MASSACHUSETTS
- 4 RHODE ISLAND
- 5 CONNECTICUT
- 6 NEW JERSEY
- 7 DELAWARE
- 8 MARYLAND

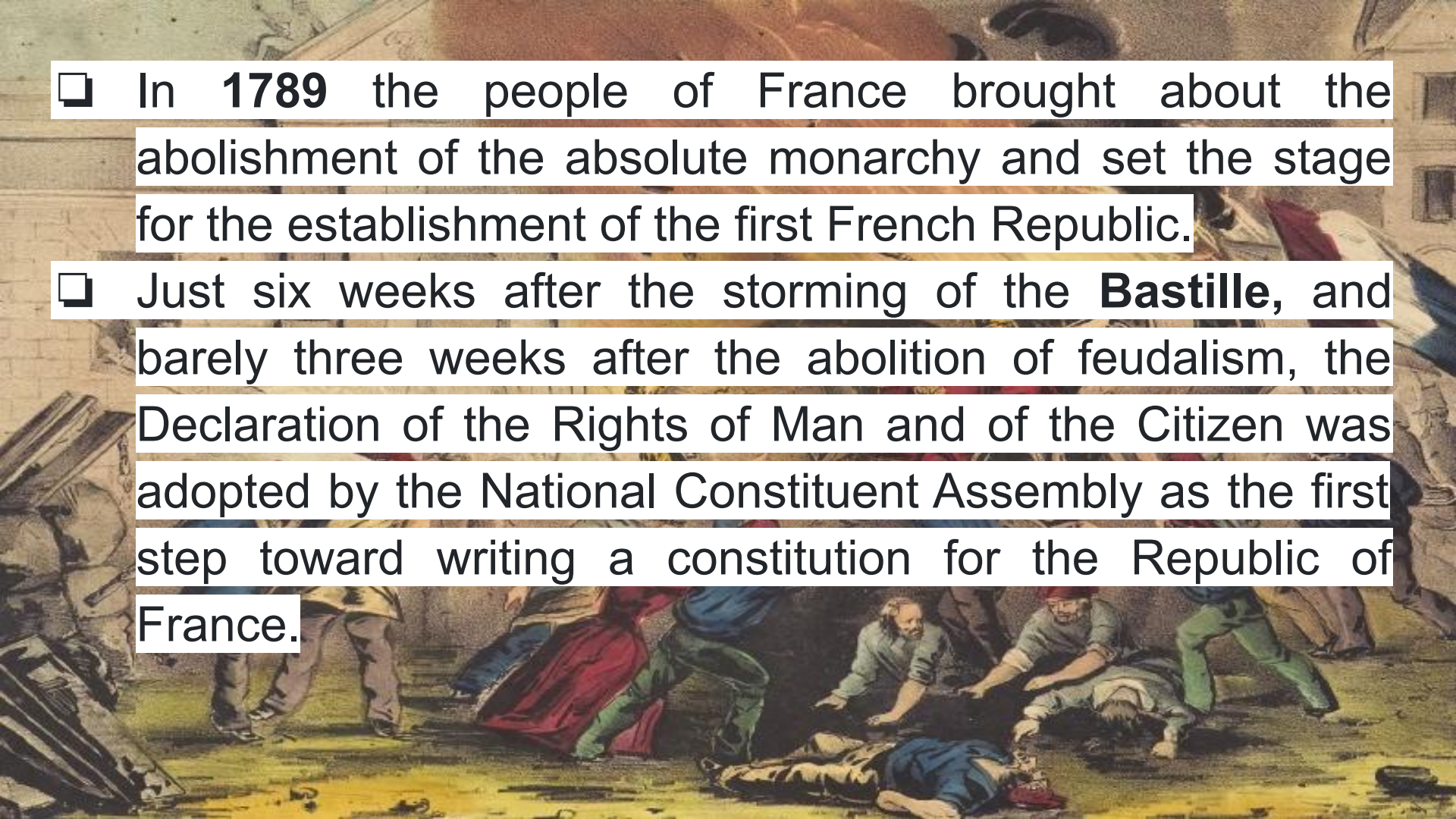
The background of the image is a historical map of the United States, showing state boundaries and major cities. The map is framed by a decorative, ornate border with a repeating floral or scrollwork pattern. The text is overlaid on the map in white boxes with black outlines.

The first ten amendments to the Constitution—the Bill of Rights—came into effect on December 15, 1791, limiting the powers of the federal government of the United States and protecting the rights of all citizens, residents and visitors in American territory.

The Bill of Rights protects freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the right to keep and bear arms, the freedom of assembly and the freedom to petition. It also prohibits unreasonable search and seizure, cruel and unusual punishment and compelled self-incrimination.

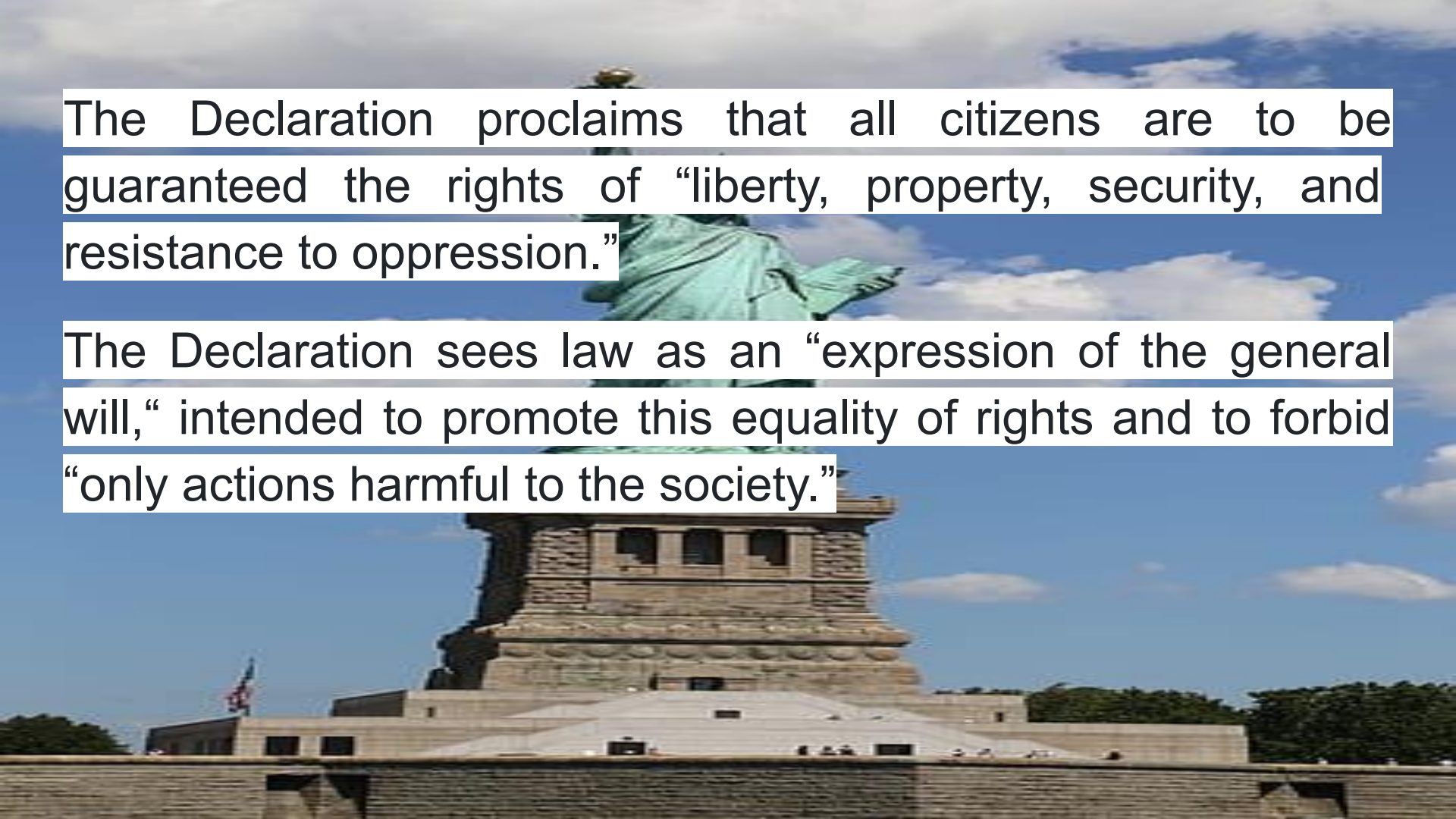
★ Among the legal protections it affords, the Bill of Rights prohibits Congress from making any law respecting establishment of religion and prohibits the federal government from depriving any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law.

★ In federal criminal cases it requires indictment by a grand jury for any capital offense, or infamous crime, guarantees a speedy public trial with an impartial jury in the district in which the crime occurred, and prohibits double jeopardy.



❑ In **1789** the people of France brought about the abolishment of the absolute monarchy and set the stage for the establishment of the first French Republic.

❑ Just six weeks after the storming of the **Bastille**, and barely three weeks after the abolition of feudalism, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen was adopted by the National Constituent Assembly as the first step toward writing a constitution for the Republic of France.

The background of the image is a photograph of the Statue of Liberty. The statue is shown from the waist up, with its right arm raised holding a torch and its left arm extended holding a tablet. The statue is green and stands on a large, multi-tiered stone pedestal. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. In the lower left, a small American flag is visible on a pole. The overall scene is bright and clear.

The Declaration proclaims that all citizens are to be guaranteed the rights of “liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.”

The Declaration sees law as an “expression of the general will,” intended to promote this equality of rights and to forbid “only actions harmful to the society.”